

Hands Held High

by XxFrostbitten ReaperxX

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Characters: Emile-A239/Noble Four, Jun-A266/Noble Three, Master Chief/John-117, SPARTAN-B312/Noble Six

Pairings: Master Chief/John-117/SPARTAN-B312/Noble Six

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Summary: She never asked to be a Spartan, but she was the best. She's a one man, hyper-lethal army who fiercely protects her own despite others beliefs. So Noble Six chooses to be a sacrifice to ensure everyone who matters survives. But even in death, the ghosts of her past remind her why she works alone. However, it's not her time, for the war has only begun and her end is far from nearing

1. Prolouge: Here We Die

****Title:**

>Hands Held High

****Chapter:**

>Here We Die

****Pairing:**

>Master Chief x Noble Six

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>Never had she asked to be a Spartan, but she was the best. She's a one man, hyper-lethal army who fiercely protects her own despite misleading allegations. So Noble Six chooses to be a sacrifice to ensure everyone who matters survives. But even in death, the ghosts of her past remind her why she works alone. However, it's just not her time, for the war has only begun and her end is far from nearing.

****Story Summary:**

>Never had she asked to become one of humanity's greatest warriors; to be a savior, a killer, a Spartan. But she made the most of it by becoming the best there ever was; a hyper-lethal assassin, a lone wolf survivor, a one man army. A person who goes beyond the norm to fiercely protect her own despite allegations against her. Having

braved through many trials of death and war at every turn, Noble Six chooses to be a sacrifice in order to ensure everyone who matters survives. Yet even in death the ghosts of her past remind her why she works better alone. However, it just isn't her time, for the Covenant/Human War has only just begun and her ending is far from nearing.

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><p>XxXXxX_

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><p>18:42 HOURS, AUGUST 30, 2552 (MILITARY CALENDAR)
**

EPSILON ERIDANI SYSTEM, UNSC MILITARY COMPLEX, PLANET REACH

ASZOD SHIP BREAKING YARD

--PRESENT--

As a Spartan, everything before being conscripted is forgotten.

Memories, family, friends, and personal life.

They go through so much ridicule, schooling, training and field work that whatever they knew before was quite literally forced from their thoughts to make room for new memories, new family and friends, a new personal life...

But then there were those moments where something would make itself known; a smell, a touch, an emotion. Just a fragment of a memory that made one remember something.

All her life, Noble Six had gone through hell and back in more ways than one, managing to survive through thick and thin, never thinking of anything else but the mission at hand to ensure victory. By no means was she a mindless machine as so many thought of the Spartan's, as she sometimes thought of herself, she just had no other purpose but to follow the orders given to her. So when Six stood there on top of the Onager, realizing that with the Pillar of Autumn gone and no orders to take or act on with a team that no longer lived, she was surprised to find the familiar feeling of abandonment in the pit of her stomach that actually made her nerves quiver.

It was the familiar part that got her.

She felt it before, but couldn't remember where. Since her conscription, she has never been alone, at least not until she willingly set out on her own. But even then, she always had a superior or an AI in her ear, instructing her when needed or debriefing details on her latest assignment. Now the silence was near

deafening, the dread of that feeling heavy. And she hated it. She had always believed everything happened for a reason. She knew as she fought that any death had a reason to it. Hers and teammates included. But never did she think that she'd feel an emotion such as this in the moments that could possibly be her last.

It didn't help that after the Autumn went into slipspace, the guns of the surrounding Covenant ships she didn't take out immediately turned to her location, dropships unloading squads of ground troops hollering for the blood that led to their failure. She looked around, her eyes scanning quickly over the area for a teammate that disappeared from her radar. She called him over the radio.

"Emile, report!"

Static.

"Dot!"

Static.

Six dropped her hand and cursed. The covies already dropped their jammers. There was no time for this nonsense. She acknowledged her... abandonment issues, and quickly filed it away for a later time. She was in no situation to dwell on anything right now except to escape the shipyard. Dropping from the MAC cannon, boots thumping hard on the metal platform, she pinged her location across the Noble COM, hoping somewhere that Emile - if he was alive - would be able to follow her trail, reloaded her weapons, and fled west.

She made it outside the structure when she met her first wave of Covenant fighters. She took them out in minutes. Wave after wave of troopers varying in size met her head on after that as she headed anywhere that wasn't near a potential glass site. Many times she had to ditch empty weapons and take arms with alien ones. They seemed to work better on their shields anyway so she wasn't all that mindful. At one point she was in a firefight for nearly an hour before she managed to take them all out with a single plasma grenade and a large chain reaction of explosions. It was a lucky break as she had to, yet again, dump her empty weapons for new ones.

Three hours Six had traveled like this. Short handed, alone, and starting to feel the pull of exhaustion. She'd been fighting for two days straight with nonstop attempts on her life. Walking, running and hiding when needed is all she did. No breaks, no rations, no water, no sleep. Sure she trained like this before and could last much longer if she came across the essentials to survive off of - she was a survivalist after all - but the Covenant weren't Insurrectionists. Insurrectionists were human. Humans were slower, their senses nowhere near a heightened level and a Spartan would lose them easily whereas the Covenant had great skills all around. They were faster, smarter, and their senses were sharp enough to hunt her and anything with her scent down within hours. She could still hear the call of Jackals - their hound dogs so to speak - behind her.

She found water first, the source a waist deep river about twenty feet wide within the mountain valley and the first thing she did was plunge in it. All dirt, blood, and scents of any kind washed off her person as she submerged and waddled through to the other side, filling a canteen in the process. She'd be tracking water for a few

minutes, but her trail would be lost until they picked up a new way of following her.

Free of chasers for a good partial hour, the Lieutenant finally came across a glassed base about five miles from the yards, stripped down to nothing but empty barracks, bare walls and dead bodies from the last team that held there. She could smell the rotting flesh through her air filters, indicating they were a few hours old. Rail guns were everywhere, as were barricades and several UNSC ordinance cases. From the spot atop a mound, she could see everything clearly, from the burning shores across the city river, to the Covenant ships glassing areas past the mountain range she had just come from. All around her the aliens took space in both air and ground, close enough to be seen but far enough away for her to stay elusive, unintentionally fencing her in.

It was twenty-two-hundred hours.

The Lone Wolf sighed.

And for once in her life, she abhorred that title.

From just a simple, solitary assassin that took pride in taking out militia groups all on her own, to a team adamant on working together to solve a problem was a big change, one she hadn't looked forward to at all but kept up the appearance that she was okay to try it out. She was a one man army, unwilling to have a team simply because she wasn't willing to throw lives away if the need call for it. She'd rather put her life on the line first than let someone else do it in her place. They had more to live for; she just had war.

Unfortunately, being an ONI dog of pedigree status, she didn't have this luxury, no longer thought of as simple cannon fodder like Spartan-III's were intended to be. She had the armor and Spartan Neural Interface to prove it.

Noble Six was now the assumed last member of a team she was proud to say she became a part of. In a little over a month they were able to warn the entirety of the human militia about Covenant plans and evacuate most of Reach in time. The valuable information was safe within the AI she had protected and delivered, along with Dr. Halsey on Jun's end... she hoped so anyway. She had nothing to regret for herself. She had done a good job; more than a good job. Nothing was at stake besides her own life and she wanted to keep it that way, foreign feeling be damned.

But then, how could she be so sure that whatever she helped get off planet was truly safe? That AI had chosen her for a reason, whatever that reason may be. Was it because she was the only one who could protect it the way she did? Was it because of how highly her rep was regarded, known and unknown? She wasn't sure, just like she wasn't sure whether or not that AI still needed her, and if it did... There was no other way off the planet unless she found another Saber launch site, an operational Pelican, or hijack a covenant cruiser.

She had to survive.

She wasn't abandoned or forgotten. She refused to think that way.

Kurt once said that Spartan's never die. They're just MIA.

She could still fight for this war.

She still had intel that someone may need.

She still technically had a job to do so long as that AI lives.

And if the only way to survive to fulfill that order was to risk her life and commandeer an enemy ship to escape off planet, so be it. In hindsight, maybe CASTLE Base was still standing. That's where Halsey and Jun went off to and she knew there was a dock station there. She was thankful for her knowledge in knowing the general location, having been there only once before during her test piloting days. It was about a weeks' travel on foot from where she was, guessing from her longitude/latitude points. She'd have to navigate by the stars in order to find out if she was right.

The joys to hold such old but important details.

Six shook her head. These scrambling thoughts were distracting her, she needed something to do in order to get back on track. She needed to make sure that their efforts weren't lost. She wasn't finished.

She had barely moved an inch to scout the area before her HUD blazed to life.

Six ducked just in time to avoid the swipe of a pulse rifle aimed for her neck, rolling with the dodge to scope out the Minor classed Elite who roared at his miss. She quickly fired her plasma pistol at the aliens' head. He snarled in agitation when his shields flared, dodging away with unmatched reflexes behind cover. He charged her again as soon as he recovered, quicker this time, making the Lieutenant take several steps back as he shot bullet after bullet towards her own head. Ducking behind a barricade, she reloaded, waited only three seconds as his steps came closer, and darted out from behind the blockage to catch the alien off guard with a swing of her gun at his face, catching him in the jaw. She followed up when he staggered with a swift kick to his stomach and made quick work of his shields with three furious punches, dealing a final blow with a shot to each of his hearts. The Elite fell dead in front of her with a gurgle.

War cries of anger had her turning around, and if she wasn't as trained as she was, emotions always in check, Noble Six would have balked at the five or so squads quickly advancing on her location. It didn't stop her eyes from widening.

When had they moved in so fast? How did they see her?

Simply looking up answered these questions and she cursed harshly at her own stupidity. Several meters behind her was a Phantom, the shimmers of a recent decloaking evident on how she missed it as it pulled away. The ship had already alerted other troops, she could see the other Phantoms and Spirits coming in closer, the spotting of a Demon too enticing to ignore.

Before she knew it, she manned a nearby rail gun and started firing.

It was too late for her to try and run or to even try a tactical play. She'd have to improvise as she went. Several Minors to Special Operation Elites, Grunts, Jackals, and even Drones were out to get her. No signs of Brutes to deal with thankfully, the Elites were bad enough, no need for a temperamental monkey literally jumping on her back to make her day. She picked off the smaller prey one by one, the small blast shield around the gun protecting her from the bigger shots of plasma fire. When it ran out of ammo, she resorted to her pistol and plasma rifle, shooting her way back to reach a more secure point of protection.

Again, wave after wave went after her, each a lot worse than the last. Again she found herself in a firefight that would either end in her favor or with her dead. Only this time, the battle lasted a lot longer than an hour.

Three days passed. Three agonizing, painful days as she, at one point, finally managed to run from the base they found her in, fleeing to the foothills to take refuge of some kind there. Sleep was scarce, food nonexistent, water a luxury. The repeating pings to a hopeless end the only thing that seemed to be pushing her onward.

Both moons were near their peak in the sky when they finally managed to corner her in a series of warehouses a mile from the nearest town and Noble Six was frustrated, angry, tired, and desperate. The Covenant were relentless, following her and finding her with constant drops of armament and vehicles. She lost count of how many times she laid traps, downed an alien or took out a Wraith but nor did she really care. The many weapons she gathered were useless, she used up all that was left of the ammo and nearly depleted all that was left of any others she found, human or alien, lying around. All she had on her was her armor lock, drop shield and combat knives.

She ran whenever she could to another warehouse, just to get away on a new playing field to perhaps get a breather. She managed to do this about five times until they caught on to her tricks and managed to box her in last second with Ultra Elites, Banshees or Ghosts blocking her path, making her retreat back inside. By the ninth time she tried this (she did say she was desperate), damaged and pretty beaten, is when they started sending down the Hunters, Zealots, Wraiths and their faster, smaller counterparts, Revenants. They were sure they had her near death. She knew this would be her last fight.

Looks like I'm not getting off this rock after all.

The pop of her shields had her running faster back to cover from the rafters above. A nearby blast from a Revenant destroyed the metal bridge she was using, making her stumble and pain suddenly riddled her side. She cried out, ducking immediately into a room and fell hard against the farthest wall from the door, a hand on the wound. When she brought it to eye level, she saw red, and lots of it.

Definitely not gonna see another sunrise again either.

In the distance, far below, Six heard the warbling laughter of an Elite, no doubt brandishing his luck in greatly wounding a Demon. She sneered. That alien was dead. With a wound this deep though, it was impossible for her to move as fast as she had been. Her visor was

also cracked - a surprise swing from an Elites rifle catching her in the face on one of her attempted escapes - taking out her radar and essentially blinding her from the field. And the aliens knew it. So it was both and not a surprise when a Zealot suddenly landed on what was left of the rafter outside the door, firing away with his carbine before she could use her drop shield.

All hits were direct on weak shields until she dropped the protective bubble and she fled again through the closed door to her right.

She ran straight into a frenzy.

Another hit to her helmet made her cringe as the left side of the visor shattered. Useless, she ripped it off her head and chucked it at the alien who broke it, resulting in the pained cry from a surviving Grunt as the Ultra dodged. The Grunt cried out as it's foot slipped off the edge, taking her helmet with it, and promptly fell the four stories down. She took the distraction as an opportunity to jump the Ultra. She managed to surprise him by shoving him as hard as she could with her shoulder to his abdomen, before jumping onto his shoulders and twisted his head with her legs in a sudden jerk that immediately sent them to the metal floor, the alien dead. She grunted in pain and cringed when getting up but took up the weapon he was holding, a near fully charged plasma rifle, and ran when the Zealot behind her started firing from the doorway. She grunted as the pain was caked on from more plasma fire from the Covenant unleashing their fury on her from below.

She killed a Minor that was in her way with a knife to the chest, she kicked away a Field Marshall coming at her with a fist. She killed another by cracking its neck. The same Zealot jumped into the fray from the help of its thruster pack and hit her protected arm when she brought it up in a block, forcing her to stop and take a step back. An unexpected kick to her back brought her to her knees. Not willing to go down on her back, she shoved as hard as she could against the Zealot and swept her leg out to trip up any around her. However, the higher classed Elite jumped away before sweeping out his own leg and catching her in the jaw. The force from the kick was enough to slam her against the railing of the rafter and break right through it. She fell three stories and landed harshly on top of a pile of crates, gravity and her weight making them crack and bend inwardly to her form. With her head uncovered, she had no protection against the impact aside from her arms shielding it. She lay motionless, dizzy from the hard hit to her jaw until a commotion brought her out of it. A hard grip on her leg dragged her from the wreck. She was tossed to the ground and rolled a few feet before a foot stomped on her stomach. The weapon was knocked from her hands when trying to use it, and then onto her back as she was ganged on.

Four Zealots howled over her, one brandishing a sword as she screamed in fury, kicking and flailing and stabbing with the combat knife she managed to take out. Even while down, she killed an Ultra by stabbing it in the neck, and another by kicking it hard over the head, embedding a hidden knife from the toe of her boot deep into its skull. But it was already too late. A pair of Hunters stood in the background, Grunts scoured the entire warehouse, Elites of all classes stood out of the way of her blight as their vehicles settled down outside. Three more Zealots replaced the dead ones, and the sword wielder, the damn Elite that had kicked her over the rafter, kicked her unprotected head hard. Another followed, stunning her as

large spots appeared in her vision. It was enough for the aliens to finally hold her still. The sharp blue glow of his weapon came down before pain consumed her entirely as it drove into her already damaged side at the exact same time shots rang out.

And as blackness took over, the thought of failure echoed.

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><p>Author's Note_

Hey guys! So first off, be gentle! It's my first Halo fic TwT Second, please bear with me on this pairing! It's experimental!

John is 41 and Six is 26. That's a fifteen year difference. I know it's weird for most people but the thought doesn't bug me much since I've grown to know people who are together and separated by age by the least of twelve years. I'm also taking in the fact that John has a constant streak of going into cryo, which slows the aging process. So even though he's 41, I'll probably make him look like he's mid-thirties. My Six, however, has no history of ever taking a break to need cryo, but we'll see in future chapters. Yes I know augmentations gave them a more mature looking body, but lets say it was a temporary thing for the sake of the story. Either way, this won't be a star-crossed lovers thing, I will be spacing out their interactions over the course of both games and books as much as possible until I deem it fitting for them to show an attraction towards one another.

Thirdly, this story will occasionally jump back and forth between past and present times, both to show how my Noble Six got along with the team and how she's going to handle being needed in the future. Don't worry, this isn't permanent and I won't touch upon exact game play - sometimes I might just to get past a scene - as I don't want people getting bored by reading something they already know about. I'm more so going to touch upon the times that aren't in the logs while referencing what happened in the missions.

And lastly, this fic is also experimental. It's more so to give me inspiration to write and see where I stand regarding my styles through your reviews. Please help me out and let me know what you think. The more I know, the better I get and the better my plays will be :D Halo fans are welcome to inform me about something I may have left out or missed and I'll do what I can to possibly integrate it if it's absolutely necessary.

Until next time! :D

2. Where It Starts

****Title:**

>Hands Held High

****Chapter:**

>Where It Starts

****Pairing:**
>Master Chief x Noble Six

****Story Summary:**
>She never asked to become one of humanity's greatest warriors; to be a savior, a killer, a Spartan. But she made the most of it by becoming the best there ever was; a hyper-lethal assassin, a lone wolf survivor, a one man army. She's also very friendly and damn well protective over her own, no one really taking care to notice. Having braved through many trials of death and war at every turn, Noble Six chooses to be a sacrifice in order to ensure everyone who matters survives. Yet even in death the ghosts of her past remind her why she works better alone. However, it just isn't her time, for the Covenant/Human War has only just begun and her ending is far from nearing.

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><p>The first thing Six woke up to was the pounding in her head and the agonizing pain in her side. The second thing she woke up to was the realization that she was awake to begin with and sat straight up with a gasp. She regretted the decision immediately when the pain tripled and went down with a cry of agony. Her vision blurred and doubled.<p>

How the hell was she alive!?

Where was she?

Noise.

The Covenant!

Danger!

No weapons!

I'm dead!

Get up! Get up! Get up!

Pain!

"Hey!" She heard a shout of surprise over her own and she struggled to get up again.

Running footsteps thumped on the ground from... somewhere, as well as sliding rocks and heavy breathing. She heard metal and clinking. She tried to scramble away but was greatly hindered as she could barely crawl. _They can't get me now! I won't let them!_

"Damn it, Alexis! You had to wake up when I'm not here?"

The steps stopped beside her and some shuffling was heard. Metal was placed near her head as well as other small trinket noises. Heavy hands grasped hers to keep them away from the burning skin, trying to force her still.

"No!" Pushing aside any and all pain as they were trained to do, she knocked the hands back harshly and scrambled up to her feet with a sudden surge of adrenaline, aiming a punch at her assaulter, hitting something in the blindness she found herself in, earning her a cry of surprise.

"Easy, Six! It's me!" Her breathing was hard as she tried in vain to focus her sight on the vaguely familiar voices' owner, but she refused to relent in her fight, stumbling when her vision doubled and nausea hit, realizing moving wasn't making her side any better. Her head was swimming. Her back hit a wall when her hearing went out. "Damn it, woman, you're bleeding! Let me help you!" the muffled voice growled in annoyance when she made another feeble but strong hit. They grabbed her arms, pulled her from the wall and practically tackled her to her back when she wouldn't stop. Her left hand was yanked away and above her head, a heavy weight pressed it to the ground, her right quickly followed and she screamed in agony as the position pulled the sensitive skin, her head flaring. She cried out even more when something wet pressed against it, causing it to sting.

Not here! Not now!

All the while, the person now straddling her writhing body worked to clean her side, muttering under her screams about the noise, trying to shush her the best they could. She dimly noticed that they were trying to be as gentle as possible and deep background noise was slowly growing louder before she passed out.

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><p>14:28 HOURS, JULY 21, 2552 (MILITARY CALENDAR)
**

**EPSILON ERIDANI SYSTEM, UNSC MILITARY COMPLEX, PLANET
MAMORE**

UNKNOWN LOCATION

_PAST-

"Holland, I've told you once, and I'm telling you again; _you can't have her_. Under what orders am I to follow that say I should release her into your custody?"

"The orders I am giving you now would suffice, Ackerson. For two months I have been told no by you and now I'm putting my foot down."

"What makes you think that's going to scare me? It's the same story over and over again, Colonel. You want her skills, but for what purpose? You have yet to give me any aside from you wanting her in your precious Noble Team."

"Not unlike you wanting her for your Special Warfare Group?"

Ackerson growled.

"You and I both know that her skills are efficient in either setting. Fighting like this is nothing but childish, so how about this. The Covenant are getting shifty. We had a dreadnought class vanish two days ago after our victory over Sigma Octanus IV. Continuous disappearances on their end have happened since in great numbers, and we don't know where."

"So what does that have to do with my Spartan if the Covenant are running scared."

"ONI's Spartan is needed on a plane that is worth her specializations, not to be your personal grim reaper! Use of her as such is a waste of ONI's resources, and a waste of my time to have to track her down. The Covenant never mobilize from a fight without doing some major damage to our fleets. You, Dr. Halsey and I have been stationing Spartan's on some of our most important home worlds as a precaution. Reach is one of them and my Noble Team is missing a member that her shoes can fill, both in skill and necessity. Now you either hand her over, or you can kiss your ass goodbye for insubordination and misuse of personnel when I report you to ONI Officials for taking her without proper authorization."

Ackerson glared scornfully, stuttering over what to say, knowing that the bastard actually had a good argument this time. It took him a few minutes to think a moment, unwilling to lose his greatest piece of machinery for his use, but also unwilling to lose his place as an Officer. He paced, ruffled his hair in frustration, paced some more and finally sighed in resignation.

"You play dirty, Holland," he relented with a deep glare. "When do you need her by?"

Holland met his stare equally. "Immediately."

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><p>25:54 HOURS, JULY 23, 2552 (MILITARY CALENDAR)
**

**EPSILON ERIDANI SYSTEM, UNSC MILITARY COMPLEX, PLANET
REACH**

UNSC OUTPOST FIFTY-FOUR

_PAST-

It was barely hitting the twenty-six hour mark on planet Reach, it's two moons shining dully in the distance, giving off a faint glow to the machines on the tarmac. However, this did not stop the fully lit Pelican from landing safely on the UNSC dry-dock, its engine cutting off before opening its rear hatch to allow a handful of soldiers all too eager to step out, one or two looking back into the hold curiously. The last to casually exit was a Spartan.

Inside the confines of her helmet, she yawned, having just woken up from the four hour long trip. It was the most sleep she had gotten in one sitting in the past two days and she felt refreshed. She looked around, seeing the empty tarmac and sleeping machines, very few engineers up to do whatever it is they do. It was a quiet night, a peaceful silence she rarely ever heard anymore without the sound of an engine or gunfire in her ears.

She kind of enjoyed it.

The door to the pilots canopy opened up, the pilot himself coming out to stretch as he walked. When he came by her side, he saluted her with a warm smile. "Sleep well?"

She gave him a nod. "Very, though I think I gave the others a scare."

"You're a walking tank, Lieutenant. I'd be scared too if I came into a Pelican with an immobile and silent Spartan sitting in the corner for three hours." She let out a laugh and he smiled. "It's been good to have you tag along, ma'am. Let's not wait too long for our next meeting, yeah?"

She smirked. She liked this pilot. "I look forward to it, Hammerhead." He grinned at the nickname and walked off to chat with a engineer.

No sooner did she fully step out, detaching the weapon that was her DMR from the wall and sticking it to her back before that, did a soldier stop in front of her. The man saluted as he came to a stop, looking her in the eye through the silver visor. "Lieutenant. Sergeant Douglas Mackey, ma'am. Welcome to Reach."

She saluted back and nodded. "Glad to be here, sir." _Not really._

"I hope the trip wasn't too boring for you."

"Not at all."

"This your first time on Reach?" Mackey asked with a nervous smile on how short her answers were.

Nope. "Yes."

"You'll find it exemplary, I'm sure. It's a nice place to be," she didn't say anything. He cleared his throat. "Anyway, if you'll follow me, I'm to escort you to the infirmary for a necessary physical before I take you to your destination assignment."

_Here we go. _The Spartan shifted her weight, not budging from her

spot as the man made to move. "The infirmary?"

Mackey stopped, turning to face her. "Sorry. Colonel Holland, ma'am. He stated that you haven't gone to see a medic in some time by the records he has and will refuse any requests you may have until you are seen and claimed fit for duty." The man actually looked a bit scared having to stare up at her to deliver this news. Holland had picked him out simply because he was one of the few that worked with Spartan's before. That and no one was willing to volunteer. It didn't mean he liked it. The giants were notorious for keeping a clean bill of health anyway and so refused to see a medic on most occasions. But that's why they end up having all these types of scars from wounds left untreated, right? Stubborn asses.

But despite his inner turmoil of wanting to get away before this particular Spartan kicked him across the yard or something, the emotion displayed only slightly, she simply chuckled and nodded. "I can agree to that. Lead the way, Sergeant."

The man, ready to flee at a moments notice, was instead dumbfounded at hearing something so foreign coming from someone who came from a group that was known to say very few words, let alone express emotion. Hearing laughter through the helmets' speakers, sounding so genuine, had him merely nodding in return before leading her away from the Pelican and towards the cluster of lit buildings straight ahead.

Inside was bright, the transitions of her visor helping to adjust to the sudden attack of light to her eyes. She was led down corridor after corridor until she was finally brought into a room big enough to hold a small troop plus some. Closed doors were to her right and straight ahead through more halls, to her left was a reception desk. The room was void of anyone else.

"Hmm, I'll go see if the good doctor is--"

"I'm right here!" The voice came from behind the desk, a second later a hand popped up to wave at them, then disappeared once more. "I'll be with you in a minute."

The Lieutenant blinked but the Sergeant spoke. "Uh, ma'am? Are you all right?"

The desk rattled harshly. "Yeah, I'm fine." The head of a middle aged woman was the next appendage to appear, her pale blonde hair kept up and out of her face but slightly askew from whatever it was she was doing. She propped her head on her now folded arms, not bothering to sit in the chair pushed away from her, and blew a strand of hair out of her eyes in frustration. "You guys wouldn't happen to have a spare desk cardkey in any of those endless pockets, would you?"

Mackey shook his head in confused bemusement. "Sorry, no."

"Ugh!" she stood up, showing just how small she was, and put her hands on her hips before promptly kicking the desk in her mild anger. "Stupid thing, always eating my cards. I don't know how many times I have to request for a new desk before they end up losing all the medical files of all their personnel, honestly." The two other occupants stood silently as she seethed until Mackey cleared his throat. He seemed to be doing that a lot. She looked up then and was

flabbergasted. "I am so sorry, guys. Don't mind me, I'm just a bit tired is all. Not use to these late shifts just yet." she laughed and crossed her arms, her blue eyes bright as she turned her attention to the silent woman. "You must be Spartan three-one-two, I presume."

"Yes ma'am." She nodded, not at all bothered by being classified by her tag name, not many knew her name, or any Spartan's name for that matter. Numbers and rank were the common designations among her group of people if names weren't known.

"You wouldn't mind giving this old thing a good kicking, would you?" The doctor pouted.

The Lieutenant smiled. "Unless you want the desk stuck in your wall, I'm afraid my services would only hinder your work further."

She laughed. "I like you already. I'm Doctor Traynor, the facilities new graveyard medic. Let me pull up your medical file and we'll get started. Thankfully I managed to get yours out before it locked up on me."

Still disbelieving of hearing jests coming from the armored woman, Mackey shook his head. "She's here for the full evaluation and armor repair, doc. I'll be sending a tech team to pick up the equipment."

"She'll be done before they finish."

"Armor repair?" The Spartan looked to the man.

"Yup. As soon as your armor is off, it's to be carted to the tech guys for repair and evaluation, as per Holland's request as soon as he heard you were coming ground side."

"No one told me I was to strip down." Too bad you won't get anything out of it besides my operation specs. Everyone who is anyone that's heard of her rep usually wanted the vids that accompanied her operations to see how she worked, what she finds. Her superior, however, almost always took her helmet away as soon as she came back from a mission to discard the information onto his own personal flash drive. Holland was no different when seeking what wasn't going to be there.

"It's regulation, I'm afraid." The Spartan merely nodded.

Traynor stood with a datapad in hand and motioned for her to follow. "It won't take long, promise. Thank you, Sergeant. I'll let you know as soon as she's through." He nodded his thanks and promptly left the room. "So, shall we get this over with, Lieutenant?"

"If I have to."

Traynor smiled warmly at the lilt of a whine, but she couldn't be too surprised, almost all Spartan's hated doctors visits.

Her assessment took nearly three hours. After a well deserved shower, lathering in the luxury she knew she wouldn't have for quite a while - which is one of the reasons why she accepted the visit - the Lieutenant dressed in standard issue clothes that fit surprisingly

well around her. Afterwards, everything regarding her senses and vitals was known by the good doctor. Including two wounds to her back and left leg from her last battle three days ago that needed to be sterilized and bandaged. "A battle with an Elite who had good aim," she had said. Any Elite that hit a Spartan was considered a good shot or just lucky. They weren't severe, but a good cleaning would keep her from adding scars to the small collection she already has.

Traynor grinned. "I deem you with a clean bill of health Spartan, not that I'm surprised or anything."

"I'll take the compliment justly," she let a small smile grace her lips as she pulled the shirt over her head once more. It was bad enough without her armor, with no clothes but the undergarments covering her was even worse. "Thank you, Doctor Traynor."

"It's no problem, hun. It's my job to keep everyone in shape. And it might not mean much, but I do love helping you Spartan's out. You're still people to me."

"Trust me. It means more than you think." The doctor grinned as she stood from the observation table. "Now, if I'm done here, would you kindly point me in the direction of engineering? I'd like to see what they're doing with my tech."

"Of course. And I'll make sure these get in right away."

"Thank you." With a brief explanation of the buildings layout, the Lieutenant left for the door but then she stopped near the desk. A look of contemplation crossed her face for the briefest second, and walked around it. She grasped the handle to the stuck cabinet and pulled with very little effort. The locks groaned as they were pulled out of place and slid out easily, a card dropping onto a stack of dark holopads and folders. Backing away, she nodded to the stunned doctor and walked out.

She heard laughter not a few seconds later, causing her to smirk.

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><p>Private Scarbrough, Corporal Cohana and Warrant Officer Johnson, the only Navy man in the small group of Army engineers, looked upon the hanging steel and ice colored Mark V armor with admiration. Within the span of just under three and a half hours - it being around 2:30 - they managed to buffer out all of its dents and scratches, giving it a new coat of paint to make it shine like new. Granted there were a few gashes they couldn't make disappear but it added to the badassery that was MJOLNIR armor. In addition, they also added the upgrades they had gotten from Doctor Halsey not too long ago and transferred the data from her helmet over to Holland as ordered.<p>

By this time, Johnson cracked his knuckles and yawned, stretching his arms way over his head and leaning back in the chair he sat in. "You boys ready for round two?"

"I'm ready for bed." Cohana whined. "I didn't think the armor was this complex!"

"It's a work of art all right," Scarbrough admired tiredly.

"Too bad we can't operate them," Johnson answered. "The war would be much easier if all of UNSC distributed this equipment."

"You'd all be severely injured or dead as soon as you thought to move."

All three men whirled towards the armor assembly, startled by the drowsy feminine voice that snuck up on them. The Lieutenant turned from looking over their progress to meet their eyes. "Though progress on such equipment has been in the stages to help Spartans train. not so much field action."

"Holy shit, man! Give us a heart attack why don't you!" Scarbrough cried, holding a hand to his heart.

Cohana stood up from his chair, eyeing the pale brunette woman. "We meant it figuratively, ma'am. We know the consequences," he smiled. "Are you the owner to the armor?"

You see any other female giants standing around here?

"That I am," she turns to them fully with a tiny smile, noting that the Private backed away slightly. She was used to it as not very many people are comfortable with those her height or status. She bordered on seven feet with the armor on. She could only imagine what they must feel having to look up at someone taller than their own six foot statures. "How goes the advancements?"

"Excellent, actually," Cohana, taking the opportunity to stand and step away, cleared the table top of papers and utensils, and pressed a button to activate the holographic display. "As you can tell, we buffed out most of the scratches, fixed the dents and gave it new paint. We also upgraded the software thanks to some of Halsey's schematics she sent to us a couple days ago. She's still working out some kinks for the next official upgrade, but this is what she had so far. Your reaction time should be up by a least five percent, and the battery coupling should have better distribution properties when you use, say, camouflage or armor lock. Your shields will recharge faster, but not by much unfortunately."

"But we do have some things that might tickle your fancy." Johnson walked over to a long stretched countertop and pointed to all the equipment sitting on it. "These are the latest additions you can use to upgrade the armor. We saw you had quite a bit already but it doesn't hurt to take another look at the newest toys," he then uncovered a cart to reveal several guns. "We also took the liberty to clean your weapons."

The Lieutenant actually smiled gleefully.

For the next two hours, the three males and the lone Spartan worked diligently with the understandings of her armor and what she wanted on it. She liked the original gear she wore but wasn't too concerned with changing things around to better her play on the field and since

she was basically going on assignment with a team, she had to change some things. By the time they were done, she had multiple attachments to her shoulders, knees, wrists and chest, all colored to fit accordingly. She was just stepping into the black matte skin suit - all three guys having turned away at this point to let her undress - when Sergeant Mackey stomped into the room.

"Lieutenant!" The three engineers startled at the booming call. Said woman only turned her attention to him - having heard his tromping steps way beforehand - after the suit sealed around her body. She was thankful for the cool feeling as she stretched her muscles. "I've been looking all over for you! The doctor-" he stopped just in front of her, drawn silent by vibrant green eyes giving him their attention. He eyed her face; the long pixie cut black hair lightly swept to the right in very slight waves to touch the bottom of her chin, contrasting hard with her pale skin but accenting her oval shaped face. Two small scars were barely noticeable on her left cheek. The suit - blemished with circuits that connected to her armor - illustrated her strong lithe form, one he knew could just as well kill them all in a heartbeat if she so wished.

"How can I help you, Sergeant?"

He cleared his throat after he realized he was now technically staring. He wasn't used to seeing human faces behind the mask, let alone a female one who - in his eyes- was very pretty. "The doctor said you were here when I specifically told you to stay with her."

"I recall you saying for her to inform you when my session was done," the Lieutenant smirked. "Not to stick around."

Mackey sent a hard glare at the snickering engineers and sighed. "You're right. My mistake," he crossed his arms. "Well, I guess I don't have to tell you to suit up anymore. Holland wants us to leave ASAP, says he needs to talk to you guys as a whole. It's about an hours drive from here. You know your assignment?"

Unfortunately, I do. She followed this with a nod. "I was briefed before I landed. I have my orders, sir." Her voice was clearer and warm when not spoken through speakers, he noticed.

"Right. Well than, proceed. Meet me on the tarmac no more than an hour from now. We'll be leaving at oh-seven-hundred," he turned to leave but stopped, opened his mouth as if to say something, thought better of it and left. This irritated her somewhat and she shook her head. If you had something to say, one should say it.

Says the person who hardly speaks at all. She really needed to stop talking to herself.

"I think you got him tongue tied, Lieutenant." Cohana laughed. "He's never one for a loss of words."

"You see the way he was eyeing you?" Scarbrough guffawed.

She huffed a laugh. "It's the charm." It wasn't the first time a soldier had eyed her. She learned to ignore them.

"So!" Johnson clapped his hands. "How's about we get you into this

armor!"

"I say yes," replied the Lieutenant as she stepped into the assembly. "Too much longer without it and I may end up getting a tan. God forbid that happen." She rolled her eyes in mock annoyance, smirking when she received laughs from the three men. No one really knew that she had a sense of humor, even if it was sarcasm.

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><p>It was around seven-forty in the morning. The hog rode smoothly down the trail to her destination, tailed by two UH-144 Falcons as escort. She suspected they were there to accompany the camp forces as well, but she couldn't be too sure. Either way, the droning of their propellers and the humming from the hog was somewhat lulling, and the scenery around her was beautiful.<p>

The Lieutenants helmet was off for a good portion of the silent trip as she enjoyed the feeling of the wind passing through her dark hair. She rarely felt the wind on her face, having to constantly wear protection, and the feeling was nice and cool. But alas, when she saw the distant camp over the next few hills, tucked in a corner at the base of a mountain, she sighed and looked into the silver visor of the Mark V helmet. Weary but determined green eyes stared back at her.

It's show time Spartan.

She donned the helmet, the hiss of its pressure seal a reassurance as the cool compression set in. Twenty minutes later and the hog was pulling to a stop, the two Falcons landing somewhere nearby. She stepped out with ease. "It's been nice seeing you, Lieutenant," she looked to Mackey, a smile was on his face. "I'll see you around. Kick some ass."

She tilted her head, and even if he didn't know what she meant, she crossed a thumb in an arch across the part where her mouth would be. Apparently he got it, as he laughed and waved while pulling away. She had just given him a Spartan smile.

She turned and was met with a helmetless stare from a fellow Spartan sitting in an idle Falcon. First thing she noticed was that his blue eyes were keen and thoughtful, no doubt assessing her actions he just witnessed. Not one to look away first, she kept it. She must have done something right since he smirked, shook his head and continued to mess with the sniper on his lap.

"First building to the left," she rose a brow at his accent, but nodded her thanks and pat the tail of the bird as she passed it.

Internally, the Lieutenant sighed, just knowing her interactions were going to be harder than that. It wasn't like she hated working with others, she just couldn't stand losing anyone under her command. She worked better alone because she got the work done in half the time a team could without having to worry about someone's safety.

But there was one person who she wouldn't have trouble with.

Entering the building she was told to go to, it didn't take long to find out where the rest of her new team was. As soon as she walked inside, she immediately evaluated her surroundings. She counted four Spartans, all bearing different color schemes. Three wore no helmets, the fourths' donned a skull. All of them were well weaponized. Two were sitting on opposite ends of the room, two were standing. The only female of the group put her hand out to stop her from coming in further. The Lieutenant was a bit put off by the mechanical arm that was suddenly in her face and the multiple stares she received but didn't flinch.

"I didn't think I'd be seeing you again, Alexis."

The Lieutenant recognized her as Catherine-B320, a fellow Beta Spartan she long thought dead. Both happened to be top of their company and strived to be better than the other. In turn, it led to a rivalry that was basically a very close friendship.

The Lieutenant, Alexis, smiled beneath the mask. "You're just jealous I survived, Kat."

Kat scoffed but smiled in return and lowered her arm. "You're not that easy to kill."

And just like that, she knew that even though a team was something that still left a foul taste in her mouth, just knowing that a friend was alive, well and kicking just as much as she was, and would be working with again was a reassurance. She trusted Kat with her life. And if she was with this team, then so be it, she will try her hardest to be too.

"Nice arm."

"I can arrange one for you if you'd like."

"And mess with my already robot-like appearance?"

"It'll be an improvement."

It was like they never were apart. And the other three simply stared in befuddled amusement before taking it upon themselves to know their new Noble teammate.

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><p>Author's Note_

Second chapter! Yeah!

So as I said in my last note, chapters will be going back and forth between past and present in spontaneous moments. I will be putting "past" or "present" under the initial dates and locations to keep

from having people confused.

Anyway, I wanna say thank you to the reviews I got. It's not many but I'm happy some of you enjoy my writing. But I must insist that reviews are like a lifeblood to knowing how well I'm going about this fic. Feedback is crucial to me and I will respond back to whomever decides to leave a review behind to explain further my intentions if they so wish.

Otherwise, until next time! :D

3. Three's A Company

Title:

>Hands Held High

Chapter:

>Three's a Company

Pairing:

>Master Chief x Noble Six

Story Summary:

>She never asked to become one of humanity's greatest warriors; to be a savior, a killer, a Spartan. But she made the most of it by becoming the best there ever was; a hyper-lethal assassin, a lone wolf survivor, a one man army. She's also friendly and damn well protective over her own, no one really took care to notice. Having braved through many trials of death and war at every turn, Noble Six chooses to be a sacrifice in order to ensure everyone who matters survives. Yet even in death the ghosts of her past remind her why she works better alone. However, it just isn't her time, for the Covenant/Human War has only just begun and her ending is far from nearing.

Disclaimer:

>__Everything I own belongs to me. Everything I don't own belongs to Bungie, Microsoft, 343 Industries and their respected owners.__

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><p>05:12 HOURS, SEPTEMBER 6, 2552 (MILITARY CALENDAR)</p>

EPSILON ERIDANI SYSTEM, UNSC MILITARY COMPLEX, PLANET REACH

UNKNOWN LOCATION, VIERRY TERRITORY

-PRESENT-

When she next woke up, everything was silent except for a soft _drip-drip_ echo somewhere off behind her. Alexis woke up cold, a

shiver running down her spine, making the existing bodily ache more pronounced. She was on the ground, lying on something soft but still relatively uncomfortable; that same softness was covering her torso, a brief feel told her both were cloth (blankets, she guessed) and that she was practically naked if it wasn't for the sports bra keeping her upper half decent. Her shoulders were bare to the cool air but a small warmth to her left took the chilling bite away.

Her stomach had settled from its nauseating behavior. She opened tired, blurry eyes and was thankful to actually see straight, even if her first sight was immediately greeted by dimly lit brown-red rocks. Confused, she blinked and turned her head only to be met by small embers from a makeshift fire pit. Turning the other way, she was met with a closer rock face, armor pieces lined against the wall.

Her entire armor in fact.

And every bit of it was covered in burns, gashes and blood, the steel color now black and the ice blue nearly gone.

That's when the memories began to clear.

She didn't know how long she was staring at the half shattered visor of her helmet, the module uplink now missing, before the sound of sliding rocks and footsteps approached her. Her initial reaction was to feign sleep and wait to pounce the potential enemy, but then a memorable hiss thwarted this response.

"You're awake."

The feeling of surprise came in the form of widening eyes and a deep feeling of relief somewhere in the recesses of her subconscious. Her gaze tore away from her head gear and to the voice above her. Everything seemed so fuzzy and dull, slow and tiring, as if she were running through tar, both physically and mentally. But when her eyes met the green ones of a familiar figure, she had to chuckle a bit through dry, scratchy vocals.

"Finally decided to get here did you?" she quoted from Carter that seemed so long ago.

He tilted his head, thought a moment, then shrugged and smirked. "Sorry. I'd drive over the mountains to get by faster, but I don't think that would bode well with the hog... or my discretion when getting by Covenant. Which is why I don't think they let me drive any time I'm offered one."

Alexis smiled and blinked. "Smart ass."

"You said it." He sat down beside her, setting down his carved helmet and dropped a few things to the dirt that she didn't notice he carried. They were slightly burned ration bars and medical supplies. Her smile faded when she caught sight of a familiar imprint on his shoulder.

"I'm sorry, Emile."

The older Spartan paused. He looked to her for a moment, followed her line of sight, then back to finding anything still worth using. "About what?"

Alexis brought her left arm up and barely smacked his armored forearm, burnt and gashed and covered in alien blood just like hers. She stared at each single mar of his suit. "For hitting you."

"You call those hits?" He scoffed. "I barely felt them."

She knew her hits were hard. They wouldn't hurt him in the state she was in, yes, but he could still feel the power behind them if she aimed to kill. Which she had tried to do, hence the first sized dent in his shoulder armor. "And for leaving you behind."

Emile sighed at length and ran a hand through his dark hair. "You shouldn't be sorry. You had no choice. Just be lucky that I came in time to save your ass."

"You followed my pings?"

"Yeah, and the blood trail. So happens you were going the opposite direction. Had to turn around when I finally got rid of the Zealot bastards I was trailing. Wasted a lot of shotgun ammo though." He motioned to the weapon on his pack.

Her hand fell limp onto her chest, her gaze returning to the ceiling. Her mind was slow, but she remembered being overwhelmed by Zealots after she fell off that rafter. Seven of them if she counted right. She remembered being stabbed where her burn was if the throbbing in her side was any indication, and being kicked in the head by a hoof hard enough for her to see stars. Twice. She remembered all the blood she spilled, all the cries of death she heard, and the agonized screams of the angered as their brother-in-arms fell to just one lone Spartan. It was amusing as well as unnatural. She remembered the sound of a gun going off. At the time, she thought it to be her imagination. Delirium settling in as she fought off the dark.

She startled at snapping fingers above her face, reflexes reacting fast as her arm went to snag the perp. Emile instead snatched hers. "Hey now, wake up. I can't have you going to sleep on me," Alexis looked to him questioningly and a bit alarmed. Hadn't she been faster than him? No one was faster than her. He pointed to his head. "You have a concussion. This is the first time you woke up without screaming bloody murder and I'd like you to stay awake for a while to make sure you're okay. I can already see some side effects."

"Side effects?" Alexis didn't even realize she was falling asleep, but at least she knew why she was sluggish and her eyes heavy. She knew the consequences of falling asleep to a potential hazardous head injury. She considered sitting up but knew it would only aggravate her teammate and her side, so instead she rolled her head slowly to stare at the dying embers of the fire. Conversation would have to do.

"Your speech is slower, as is reaction time." Emile emphasized this by releasing her wrist. "Your pupils are slightly unfocused and you're more sentimental than normal."

"What's that suppose to mean?"

He chuckled. "How's your head?"

She huffed. "Slight headache."

"Eyesight?"

"Fine. A bit blurry."

"Hearing?"

"What are you, my doctor?"

"Just answer the question."

"... mild buzzing."

He only hummed and there was silence. She took the few minutes to observe that they were in a cave, that what little she could see outside from the high entrance it was dark. Questions arose from when she had last been conscious. What happened outside? What time was it? How'd they get here without being seen? Why isn't Emile worried about being found?

Snapping fingers startled her again. She managed to keep her arm still this time. He sighed when she gave him a thankful nod and went back to staring at the fire.

"How bad was it, Emile?"

He said nothing at first, prompting her to look at his face. Having finished his menial task, he went to staring at the fire as well. It took him a moment to actually say something, and his voice was quiet. But his eyes showed pain and... and fear. "It was bad. Nearly lost you twice. Once when you first regained consciousness; made enough noise to attract a lot of attention. Barely got us out of there in time before you nearly bled out. And again when I brought you here. You went into shock and showed signs of hypothermia." He sniffed. "You were in and out of sleep after that, crying out and mumbling. I didn't need to see another one of my own dying in front of me so soon."

The tone of grief was light on his tongue, enough to be ignored if one wasn't paying attention to it. Alexis always paid attention and caught more than just grief. "I made it didn't I?"

He let out a chuckle. "You did. Albeit stubbornly."

"Kat did say I was hard to kill," she mumbled fondly, sadly.

"I remember." Shifting to kneel next to her, a tube of something in his hand, Emile motioned for her to sit up. "Now I know you just woke up, but it'll be easier to change those bandages and get this on the wound now that you're conscious." She did as told, sluggishly removing the blanket to reveal her covered chest and bandaged mid-section. The black matte skin suit was still there, the top half having been rolled down to her hips. The blankets were smaller than she realized but enough to get their purpose done to protect her wound from infection by dirt.

"Where are we?"

Emile set a hand beneath her shoulders as Alexis used her one good

arm to push herself up. She grit her teeth as the pain made itself known with each miniscule movement. "We're still in Viery territory. It's the only one the Covenant don't seem to want to touch much."

"That can be either a good thing, or a bad thing. I'm going with the latter." When she was up straight, leaning on her left arm shakily, Emile went straight to work, glad that exposure of body parts wasn't a huge issue between Spartans do to hormone suppressors. And because they simply didn't care much. Bodies were bodies. Privacy mattered, sure, but there was a time and place for those when not under threat.

"I wouldn't look at it if I were you."

"And now that you say that, I'm going to look."

He laughed and Alexis looked down to her revealed stomach, only to cringe in horror at the damage done. A nasty puckered and bubbly red burn was like a beacon on her pale complexion, the sword injury that pierced through her body - narrowly missing her inner organs just shy of a few centimeters - was crudely sewn shut. The entire thing was literally all of her right side, not a sign of normal skin to see.

"I can safely say that this is the worst wound I've ever had."

"I told you not to look."

"Well excuse me for being curious of my own body." She stared at her covered feet instead.

He laughed again. "Major second degree burns, some minor third degree. I managed to soothe it some when I came by a stream," Emile started squeezing an ointment looking paste onto his now bare hands. "You didn't even stir when I dunked you in. It stopped most of the blisters from growing but that's when your bleeding started. It was only a trickle so I biofoamed it and left you alone in an alcove to hunt down medical supplies," as gently as he could, he spread the paste over the angry wound, making her cry out as the skin burned on contact. "Sorry... I managed to find just enough equipment to sew the open wounds and bandage you up before the shock or hypothermia set in after your second waking fiasco."

She chortled after sucking in a breath. She grew numb to near death experiences. "You're sewing sucks."

"Good thing I'm not a doctor than."

"Than I win this battle," she smirked.

Emile sighed and unrolled a new bandage once the ointment was smeared evenly across her skin. "I'll assume your concussion is minor than, seeing as you still have your witty tongue."

"I'll take the compliment justly," and they both fell silent as the bandage was wrapped around her. When he finished, he helped her lie back down, settling the tattered blanket back over her exposed upper body after seeing her shiver.

"It'll be a couple days before you're back in walking shape, Lieutenant. So I suggest taking it easy," Emile sat back down, taking his weapons off to lean against the wall next to her.

She blinked owlshly. "What about the Covenant?"

He looked down at her, a sad quirk on his lips. "You've been out for four days, Six. The bastards have moved on to the next helpless city. You and I are the last ones in this area..." She saw his grip tighten around his shotgun. "We'll be fine."

Four days?

She was never out for more than a few hours.

Alexis didn't know how to feel about this. She knew she should be angry, sad and distressed even, but at the same time she felt nothing. Was that the concussion or has she actually blocked off emotion from feeling anything like many times before? But this was a city, an entire planet! One she was actually a part of. Was she suppose to cry? To seek revenge. Deep down she knew she did.

For the rest of her time awake, Alexis sipped on water from Emile's canteen and ate very little, eventually drifting into slumber, caught in burning dreams and horrifying nightmares.

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><p>September 8, 2552_

She slept for two days straight afterwards, waking to find Emile cleaning his gun. After he assessed that she was fine for the time being, they talked to pass the time for hours. Eventually, the nagging thought he had since he rescued her came to the forefront of the conversation. "Still can't believe you took out all those aliens on your own. You sure you never got some help?"

"No one was alive wherever I went. It was all me."

"But there were Wraiths and Banshee's and Hunters and all sorts of artillery used! You, alone, singlehandedly, took all of those out?"

"Most, yes."

"So the files Kat gave us, saying you make militia groups disappear?"

She sighed. "They will disappear if I'm asked to make it happen."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Since when?"

"Since I was drafted from my company."

Silence. "How old are you, Six?"

"Twenty-six, last I remember."

He laughed. "Convenient. You must have brought hell to your company."

"I guess. I actually never wanted to become a Spartan." Emile gave her a surprised look. "I was almost too old to go through with it, but then the docs found I had the special something Halsey looked for in her Spartan-II's; they didn't risk losing me. Guess that explains why I mouth off sometimes."

"You're quiet most of the time."

A shrug. "Comes with the assassin part of my profession. I don't normally talk unless spoken to. I'm not afraid to say that got beaten out of me."

"So you're a pilot, an assassin, a one man militia, and a good shot? Where've you been all my life?"

"Don't get any funny ideas."

They laughed.

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><p>September 11, 2552_

It was her turn to ask a question out of the blue.

"So how'd you fight the aliens off me when even_ I_ was outnumbered and overwhelmed?" She fiddled with her combat knife, throwing it up and catching it with her left hand. She still wasn't allowed up according to her 'doctor' or to use her right arm, even though it's been a good two days since she safely woke up. She knew, she counted them by the fading sunlight outside.

Emile didn't stop his cooking of the decently sized bird he managed to hunt down an hour ago. "Simple. I'm badass."

Alexis caught the knife by the blade and gave him a look. "Seriously?"

He grinned. "You were injured pretty bad, enough to be a hindrance. I was just tired and you know we can beat through that easily. I shot at the Zealot with the sword first, which is why he missed your vital point. All of them thought you dead when you didn't move and went after me. Took a bit but I killed enough before I could finally scoop you up and out of there before more came," he pulled a silver cylinder from his waist and showed it off. "Even got myself a souvenir." He activated the energy sword with a _kshhhh_ and the blue

light lit up the entire cave.

"Charming." She took a drink of water from the canteen near her head.

"Comes with the job."

A knife suddenly pierced through the animals chest, very close to the other Spartan's arm, and Alexis laughed at Emile's bewildered face. She grinned when he deactivated the sword and took the knife out of their meal, waving it at her. "Really?"

"Comes with the job."

"Of what? Annoying me?"

"Every chance I get."

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><p>September 14, 2552_

It was a silent night. Emile was out scouting the area and would be gone for an hour or two. Thanks to augmented regenerative properties and sleep, Alexis had recovered enough in the past eight days to at least hold her own with his pistol in case something were to happen. But at the moment, she was content to just stare into the small fire.

She lay on her undamaged side, her left arm pillowing her head with the weapon close at hand. Her mind was clearer, thoughts running through them and past memories flashing by. The concussion, she assumed, had passed. But the more she thought, the gloomier she became. Emile wasn't there to talk to her, her ears were buzzing in the constant silence. A headache was beginning to form.

That stupid abandoning feeling came back.

And because she had time to finally acknowledge and sift through it, it became clear why and where it came from.

She remembered that she once felt it before when she was very small. After she was taken from her home, from her friend that had helped her through her tough lifestyle. She was dead now.

She missed them.

Jorge. Kat. Carter. Jun.

She missed them all. Three she knew were dead. She'd seen them first hand. One was MIA.

She remembered the second time being with Kat. When they were separated by different needs in the war and she thought her dead as well until Noble team.

Catherine was the only true friend she's had since being conscripted, regardless of the years spent apart. Out of all of them, Kat knew her strengths and weaknesses the best simply by growing up with her. They were friendly enemies as their instructors were to say. Each trying to outclass the other in good fun but never admitting that they enjoyed it. But Alexis wanted to hit her so hard for being so stupid as to not keep behind her. Alexis wondered over and over again how her fate could have been different if she hadn't looked back at the glassing site. The destruction was a huge shock, yes, but a Spartan was always focused. And although it was curiosity that killed her - it was always her hitch - Alexis missed how Kat could always find ways to surprise her with what she could find through her file of black.

She missed them.

Jun was her conversationalist. Alexis wasn't much of a talker, but he was someone who had everything and nothing to talk about, never minding about her quiet habits as she always had something to say back. Jun was always the one to keep her from being bored, always wanting to compete with her sniper skills when she had one of her own. He trusted her right off the bat for reasons he never explained, which helped her greatly when transitioning from being a lonesome warrior to a team player.

Jorge was practically her interpreter, always knowing, somehow, what her inner thoughts would be and voicing them. She found a bond with him she didn't share with the others. She speculated that it was because they thought alike. Alexis missed his wise words and caring disposition. His ideals and stories about his brethren. Those were always something to listen to, to hear the differences between them and the newest generation. It was a needed change from a Spartan-III lifestyle, which is why she wanted to yell at him for sacrificing himself, for throwing her off the ship as she watched him detonate the bomb into oblivion.

Carter was someone she couldn't quite place, though a big brother would probably fit just right. He was protective, forceful when need be, supportive, authoritative and would lend an ear if someone asked for it. She didn't know whether to give the guy a smile or a kick in the ass sometimes until he too suffered from the loss of Kat. Alexis wasn't big on sentimentality but watching him mourn for three days and disappear once they reached base was one of the hardest things she's had to watch. His drastic change in tone since her passing after that... He deserved a kick in the ass for being a hero. They needed the path sure, but he was their guiding hand, their ground. But there was no denying that he was mortally wounded, Dot calling to him when he wouldn't answer. He was done, and he went out protecting his own.

Her brothers. Her sister. Her friends.

Alexis tucked her head in the crook of her elbow, feeling the sting of her nose and the watering of her eyes and cursed. It was her only flaw. Eventual emotional breaks regarding a lost team. ONI wants to see her break, she just knew it. She was no good in groups and would fight telling them so. She refused to work with anyone for this exact reason. She had no word against Holland though, or any of her superiors that possibly knew this in hopes of trying to break her of the habit.

A hand rested on her shoulder, and the silent tears fell.

"Even a Spartan cries, Alexis. You don't have to hold 'em back." It was the closest to a confession from Emile that he too cried for his fallen brothers that she'll ever get. He did not condemn her for it.

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><p>24:34 HOURS, SEPTEMBER 16, 2552 (MILITARY CALENDAR)
**

**EPSILON ERIDANI SYSTEM, UNSC MILITARY COMPLEX, PLANET
REACH**

UNKNOWN LOCATION, VIERY TERRITORY

PRESENT

A full ten days passed before Alexis was able to remotely move. The sting of the wound was still strongly apparent, but it was at the point where she could grit her teeth and bear it enough to move to a new location. The Covenant might be gone, but not their search parties and they've stayed in the cave longer than what was safest.

"I don't know why you kept this thing when I can hardly use it anymore," Alexis turned her helmet around, gliding a gloved hand across the sharp edges of the half broken visor as she leaned her weight against the rock wall. She had thought it lost when it fell.

It felt so good to stand again, even if it was in a slightly slumped position.

Emile - garbed in full gear - grabbed the back and front pieces of her armor, now partially clean of filth just as his was. "You can still use everything it's meant for and its protection." Alexis spread her arms to each side - her right going only so far - allowing him to attach the equipment to their spots as she wasn't able to do so. There was a gaping hole on her right side, covered only by the white bandages beneath her matte suit, but so long as he stuck to that side of her, she'd be fine. "Nice chuck at the grunt though."

She stared at the blue mark where the helmet hit said alien. "I was aiming for the Elite. I'll still be blind as a bat, you know."

"That's what you have me for."

"I feel so safe already." She earned a small shove in jest. Her suit hissed as it connected with the last of her armor pieces, the compression a good feeling of protection around her skin. She hissed however when the compression came too close to her burn. As a

finishing touch, he handed her his MA5 and one of his sidearm's, keeping the M45 for himself. "So, did you have a destination in mind?" she asked, checking the ammo. "Or were you just planning on moving from location to location?"

Emile turned to her after having poured water on the fire pit, their augmented sight enough for them to see in the total darkness. "We're headed north, actually."

"North?" Alexis waved away the smoke attacking her face.

He nodded. "When I headed out last, I got something from the emergency-band radio. Here," he helped her put the helmet on as it needed two hands. Alexis adjusted it accordingly, a bit unnerved that she didn't see her readings or hear a hiss, only the feel the compression as it settled to fit. "I'm sending you the feed I recorded."

It took a minute for the helmet to calibrate itself. She could imagine the feeds she'd be getting if the whole visor was still there, giving her input on health, shields, weapons, and radar. When it finally did, and she opened the COM channel to receive Emile's file, it was a short clip of only seven soft varying whistles. She listened to them intently, trying to make it out as she replayed it over and over.

"I don't get it," she looked to him. "It's just whistles."

"But it's suppose to mean something. Why else would they put it on the emergency channel?"

"I don't know... You sure it's coming from the north?"

"Who's the one with the working helmet?"

Alexis only rolled her eyes. After making sure they had everything of use, she followed her teammate to the exit, which happened to be an incline of smooth rock. She sighed inwardly and followed his footsteps precisely, finding nooks their boots could cling to. It took her longer to reach the top, Emile helping her climb the last few feet with ease. She was breathing heavily from the small excursion.

"Damn it." _This is going to take a lot longer to recover from. _Without proper medics to look at her injury, it was definitely going to hinder their progress.

"I'd say take your time, but we've gotta start our hike," Emile positioned himself on her right. "I don't know how far we have to go and we've overstayed our welcome."

"I know," she took a deep breath of the night air and stood straight. It was the first time she looked upon what was once green lands in days. Burning fields and trees, red scars, dark clouds billowing upwards into the red sky, and ash everywhere. Being so high up gave them a good view of the flaming landscape and the cities farther away. It was horrifying and unrecognizable.

"We never even had a chance."

Stealing herself like many times before, Alexis sniffed and waved a hand out. "Just lead the way, Emile. We don't have all night."

He nodded, took his shotgun out and started heading down the mountain side. The view still bothered him as well.

They traveled an easy mile northward with no conversation. They traveled three more miles in a similar fashion. By the seventh mile, nearly four hours into their walk, Alexis was on the brink of overexertion. She stood against a tree maybe ten yards behind Emile, who was scouting ahead at the moment as they were walking from wooded land to open hills. Her left hand hovered over the wound, unable to touch it to soothe it. They were nowhere close to a spot where a campout was possible.

"You all right, Six?" He asked concernedly, having come back.

"Peachy," she nearly growled out.

Emile sighed. "Come on. Just a few more miles."

"Anything from the E-Band?"

"Just the same set of whistles."

"Any regularity?"

"None so far."

She nodded. "What are the coordinates to this place anyway?" He told her after a second and her eyes widened. Immediately she stood away from the tree, stumbled a bit, caught herself, and walked to the crest of the hill.

"Hey, what's wrong?"

Alexis ignored him, instead training her eyes on the horizon, ignoring the desolation and scrutinizing every detail she could. Everything seemed to burn red, blocking out the moonlight with black clouds. Scars from plasma bombardment still shone orange and large craters or trenches marred the once beautiful scene. She saw a lone corvette ship hovering over the city west of them, tiny spots that were cruisers or banshees floating around it. Covenant were still glassing and resting was out of the question.

She finally pointed to a set of mountain ranges a bit to the east. The sky was less red colored and more its normal nightly shade. "That's where we're headed."

Emile followed her finger and rose a brow. "The mountains?"

"The Highland Mountains. What we're headed for is on the other side in the cliffside. I'm sure of it."

"What is?"

"Our destination."

"Care to elaborate?"

He was disregarded when she set off briskly, ignoring the sting and burn her body loathed. "Six, wait!"

"Come on!"

"Six!" He groaned in annoyance and caught up to her easily. "You're doing that secrecy thing again, aren't you?"

"I'm a classified mess, remember? There are things I know about that I shouldn't and won't tell you."

"But you know what's over there." He rose a brow.

"Yes."

"So you lied to us when you said you've never been to Reach."

"No."

He blinked. "No?"

"I've never been to Reach." She gave him a look that said otherwise.

Emile shook his head and chuckled. "Yeah, right. Classified stuff."

"You're catching on."

"What's the point in hiding that anyway when we might not even get off this planet." His answer was silence. He rolled his eyes. "Think you can handle the trek?" he looked to her hovering hand, and slight limp.

"I can tough it out until we reach the mountains' base."

Emile stared at the distance. "That's a good forty or so miles, Six."

"Then we better get started."

Five miles later and Emile had enough. For over two hours, on top of watching their surroundings, he listened to her breathing become heavy, watched her pace slow, and her limp worsen. He saw the strain of determination around her eyes, as well as the struggle to continue. He wasn't about to indulge on her stubbornness and so finally stepped in front of her to make her stop as soon as it was safe to do so. "You need to rest."

Alexis glared at him. "We need to get to the mountain."

"Not in your current condition we aren't." She tried side stepping him but he grabbed her good arm and pulled. She cried out when it sent a blaze down her side and she fell back. He caught her easily by the front of her armor and propped her up against a series of jutting rocks beneath an overhang, a boot on one of her own to keep her from getting up.

"I fucking hate you right now," she hissed.

"Glad to know we're on similar grounds," he crouched. "Listen. Whatever it is that you won't tell me about can wait. We're in open land with Covenant still hovering around us. We can't risk you limping about to defend yourself."

"I thought that's what I had you for."

"Don't be a smartass. We wait an hour, and then we'll head off again, deal?"

Alexis didn't like it. She knew she was slowing down, was most likely aggravating Emile with keeping it to herself. In her defense, it was how she always worked. Injured and near unconscious, she still got her job done. The best example would be New Alexandria when she literally fell from orbit. Lives didn't wait for her to recover. She pushed and pushed until she dropped. With their destination a known location she refused to tell her partner, despite whatever they were using as an emergency call, she wasn't willing to stop. She wouldn't have stopped but she had to admit that Emile had a point. She was injured, a lot worse than she previously thought, and they wouldn't do any good with her like that if they ran into trouble. They still had many miles to go and she stared at that path until she relented and sighed. "Just one hour."

Nodding, he sat down with her and gave her his canteen. She needed it more than he did as hers ended up lost in those three days alone. But just as she accepted it, uncapped it and took a drink, a very familiar and dreaded whistle reached their ears. Not a second later did a large glowing blue ball land barely two yards from them, hissing savagely.

"Shit!" Unable to dodge fast enough, Emile practically jumped on top of Alexis, slamming a fist into the ground to activate his armor lock. Instinctively, Six curled under him, turning her head away from the blast. The heat was too close for comfort, the sound nearly deafening without the visor to completely block it out. The moment the explosion passed, rock and dirt now covering their armor, Emile unlocked, grabbed her arm and pulled her upright.

"Go!"

They both ran away from the overhang, Emile sticking to her right the entire time. Both had their weapons out but was unable to find where the attack came from. Plasma bullets and needles suddenly followed their wake, their shields deflecting the minor shots but unable to keep up the barrage for long. He shot shell after shell of bullets at the hills closest to them, hearing some satisfying deaths. Alexis used single precision shots from her pistol, finding the snipers and taking them out as she went, right arm tucked to her side. They were no match for her even without her visor.

"On your nine!" she turned and took out a Grunt readying its plasma blast.

"Five o'clock!" he turned and took out the Jackal.

No Elites, and that's what was worrying. Adrenaline pumped through her veins, her attention focused solely on surviving as they booked

it across the hills, staying at least ten feet apart so it'd be harder to take them both out.

And then it was deja'vu all over again.

Time slowed as they came upon a deep trench. They had no choice but to go inside as Grunts and Jackals cornered them from behind in numbers that caught them off guard. Both knew it was a trap, both knew that it could possibly be their death with the hollering whoops and cheers from the missing Elites. But both also knew that any alien standing over them from the drop-off, prepped and ready to take them out, were about to go through a Hell none of them wished to get involved in.

Emile ran out first, the shotgun clicking from empty clips. He cursed and switched to his pistol, taking out the Grunts. Alexis ran out soon after, having killed four Elites beforehand.

"I'm running out of options, Six!" he shot and took down another Elite, only for another to replace it.

"Good thing I've got a temporary one!" Before he could question it, Alexis tugged a grenade from his belt and pulled the pin, waiting only three seconds before lugging it up at three Elites and a Jackal. The grenade went off, depleting shields enough for Emile to take them out with headshots. It was about this time their own shields depleted completely and she quickly threw down a drop shield.

"Where the hell did you have that hiding!?" Emile shouted, having been taken by surprise by the blue bubble.

"How else did you think I managed to stay alive for days before you found me?" she took the limited time to catch her breath, feeling her energy being restored and switched her empty pistol to the assault rifle.

Both Spartans jumped at the sound of several explosions above them, followed by the screams of dying aliens. The Elites were momentarily distracted, turning their heads to look at something they couldn't see and she saw fear flash through their movements. A tug had her deactivating the shield and stowing it away before running up the last few yards of the trench, when she reached the opening to quickly turn around, she was astonished to find a rocket hog firing away at the small armada of aliens trying their best to fight it off.

"Lets go!" She threw Emile the two-handed weapon who caught it effortlessly, picking up a stray plasma rifle herself to downsize the remaining Elite's shields as they ran into the fray. They must have dropped twenty more aliens before the Covenant realized they were outclassed and outweaponized despite their huge numbers. They quickly turned to withdraw back into the hills, leaving the dead behind.

Emile snorted. "They retreated fast."

"And without firing back," Alexis scrutinized the battlefield, her eyes hard on just how many were left dead before directing them to the distant burning city, then to the hog. "They weren't here on accident."

Hydraulics hissed as the warthog depressurized and shut off as soon as the threat was nowhere in sight. Alexis and Emile came up to it carefully, their weapons trained on it. The vehicle was one of their own, but they didn't know if the person was as well. Until, that is, they stepped down from the back with a hard thump and came into view. Their weapons faltered at the sight of a male Spartan-II in burnt HAZOP armor.

"Spartans?" he sounded surprised as well, stopping just a couple feet from them. He noticed both were third generation by their size alone, their armor having seen better days. "Are you two okay?" as well as the lack of half a visor on one. He rose a brow.

"Fine, sir," Alexis lowered her gun, and nodded. He noticed the hole on her armors' right side. "We look worse than we are. Lieutenant Alexis-B312. I apologize for not saluting," she gestured to her injury.

"Warrant Officer Emile-A239," he followed suit and saluted. "It's good to see you here, sir."

"Likewise," the Spartan saluted the both of them, recognizing their higher ranks. "Petty Officer Second Class Joshua-029. I'll admit that I'm surprised to find survivors out here. Haven't seen any friendly's in days. Especially Class-Three Spartans in actual battle armor."

Both decided to ignore that part. "Neither have we, unfortunately. We've been cooped up in a cave for the past week."

"A cave?" his voice came out confused. "What happened?"

"Recovering," again Alexis gestured to her injury. "Took a nasty hit from plasma fire and a sword," Joshua winced visibly. "Emile saved me from dying by blood loss, potential shock and hypothermia. We just headed out a few hours ago."

Joshua nodded, noting the annoyed tone she used with the thought of being a hindrance. "That's harsh. You're lucky to be alive from that, but I'm glad to see you're up and well. There's not a lot of us left." He pointed behind himself, in the direction where the aliens ran off. "Especially after this. That was a pretty big company of Covenant. How'd you two manage to get tangled up with them?"

Emile shrugged his shoulders. "Could've been several parties coming back from their hunts. They've been scouring for days now. Wouldn't be surprised if we ended up in their path."

"Or," Alexis cut in. "We ran into them. They were headed where we were intended and came from that city. They wouldn't have scurried back as fast otherwise. There was a mission at hand."

Joshua tilted his head, his eyes narrowing slightly beneath his helmet. "And where were you headed?"

She turned and gestured to the mountain range. "In the valley across the mountains."

"There's a broadcast going out through the E-Band radio," Emile said.

"But we can't decipher what it means, only that it's coming from that direction."

Joshua hummed. "I've been getting the same thing for a few days now. I was headed that way when I came across you guys." Joshua grinned beneath his helmet and motioned them to the warthog. "Come on, grab anything you need here and I'll give you a lift. If they're sending that over the emergency COM, someone needs help."

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><p>Author's Note_

Surprise! Joshua enters the battle! I love him, even though he's not mentioned a lot. The creators also left his death in the air and so decided to bring him in. There's not much of his personality mentioned in the Halo Nation site, and my book he features in is currently inaccessible to get a reference, so if anyone wants to help and figure this out for me I'd appreciate it TwT otherwise, I'm picturing him as a curious and observant fellow who knows how to take charge when the need arises as well as dish out a joke here and there.

This chapter is loooooong! xD thirteen pages without paragraph breaks. I actually did not intend to make it this way but here it is. I couldn't shorten it any more than I've made it. I actually added each time I went over it to elaborate the spots that needed elaboration. I hope no one is deterred by this xP and in some cases, I feel like this chapter is rushed or filler-ish. Is it? O.o

I'd also like to thank everyone who reviewed, favored, followed, or just viewed this story. It's actually getting a lot more attention than I thought it'd get, which makes me happy. Please keep with me on this story, I do intend to finish it through. Days aren't set. And if it takes longer than that, know that it's either because of writers' block, lack of internet/wi-fi, or my interest has fallen into another category xD it happens often but I resist to get current projects done.

No this is not a new update! Sorry everyone who thought so! I took out the fourth chapter, taking the advise of many of you regarding flashbacks, and am going to rewrite it. However, these last three chapters have been revised. The majority of them is the same, just a few areas that were changed to accomodate the future changes I'm making. Don't give up on me guys! Schooling and studying is gonna kill me these next two months and I've only really got the weekends for extra time. The real chapter four is in the making and hopefully it will be posted sometime this month.

End
file.